

## Message Text

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15

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /056 W

----- 048140

R 081227Z DEC 76

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9919

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 17677

FOLLOWING TEL CALCUTTA 3045 DTD 08 DEC 76 SENT ACTION NEW DELHI  
INFO BOMBAY MADRAS BEING REPEATED TO YOU. QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L CALCUTTA 3045

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, IN

SUBJ: POLITICAL CONTEST IN WEST BENGAL

REF: CALCUTTA 3033

1. THE WEST BENGAL CONGRESS PARTY IS NOW FAIRLY WELL  
DIVIDED INTO TWO OPPOSING CAMPS, WITH ONLY A VERY  
FEW MAJOR FIGURES STANDING ON THE SIDELINES OR TRYING  
TO KEEP A MIDDLE GROUND. GOWB MINISTER OF STATE  
PRAFULLA KANTI GHOSE CAST OFF HIS NEUTRALITY YEST-  
TERDAY EVENING IN A STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF P.R. DAS  
MUNSHI-L.K. BOSE COALITION, WHICH IS BACKING CHIEF  
MINISTER RAY. GHOSH CRITICIZED "A PUNJABI INDUS-  
TRALIST" WHO HE ACCUSED OF INTEFERING IN THE AFFAIRS  
OF THE STATE GOVERNMENT AND CONGRESS PARTY. GHOSH'S  
COUSIN MINISTER FOR COMMERCE, INDUSTRY AND TOURISM  
TARUN KANTI SHOSH IS IN THE CAMP OF THOSE PRESSING  
FOR RAY'S DEPARTURE, THOUGH HE HAS NOT ISSUED ANY  
STATEMENTS AND HAS KEPT A LOW PROFILE. MINISTER OF  
STATE FOR INFORMATION AND MUNICIPAL SERVICES SUBRATA  
MUHKERJEE, WHO EARLIER SEEMED TO HAVE TAKEN THE SIDE  
OF THE MODERATE/CONSERVATIVE COALITION OPPOSING RAY,  
NOW APPEARS TO BE TRYING TO AVOID IDENTIFICATION WITH  
EITHER CAMP.

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2. OTHERWISE, HOWEVER, BATTLE LINES SEEM FAIRLY SHARPLY DRAWN. GOWB MINISTERS OF STATE ANANDA BISWAS, GOBINDA NASKAR AND FAZLE HAQ, AND WEST BENGAL CONGRESS GENERAL SECRETARY NURUL ISLAM, ALL OF WHOM COMMAND SUBSTANTIAL MILITANT FOLLOWINGS IN RURAL AREAS OF THE STATE, YESTERDAY EVENING ISSUED A STATEMENT AFFIRMING THAT "ADMINISTRATIVE CHANGES" ARE GOING TO TAKE PLACE IN WEST BENGAL AND THAT THESE CHANGES ARE DESIRED BY THE STATE CONGRESS WORKERS AND BY THE PEOPLE. THE STATEMENT CHARGED THAT SOME "DETHRONED" LEADERS OF THE STATE CONGRESS HAD BEEN TRYING TO MAKE POLITICAL TROUBLE BY ISSUING CONFUSING STATEMENTS. THE STATEMENT SAID THAT RECOGNITION OF SANJAY GANDHI AS "THE NATIONAL YOUTH LEADER" DID NOT DEPEND ON THE ACCEPTANCE OF ANY PARTICULAR GROUP, ANY MORE THAN DID MRS GANDHI'S RECOGNITION AS NATIONAL LEADER (THIS OBVIOUSLY IS A RESPONSE TO DAS MUNSHI'S STATEMENT ON DECEMBER 6 THAT HE RECOGNIZED ONLY MRS GANDHI'S LEADERSHIP).

3. THE CALCUTTA PRESS IS ALSO LINING UP WITH ONE OR THE OTHER OF THE TWO SIDES. MASS CIRCULATION BENGALI-LANGUAGE ANANDA BAZAR PATRIKAS HAS COME OUT STRONGY AGAINST RAY AND THE BOSE-DAS MUNSHI COALITION AND IN FAVOR OF THE CONSERVATIVE/MODERATE ANTI-RAY, PRO-SANJAY GROU. THE TWO GHOSH FAMILY NEWSPAPERS, AMRITA BAZAR PATRIKA AND JUGANTAR, ARE IN SYMPATHY WITH THE ANTI-RAY, PRO-SANJAY GROUP BUT HAVE NOT TAKEN A STRONG STAND. MOST INTERESTING OF ALL IS THAT THE STATESMAN APPEARS TO HAVE TAKEN THE CHIEF MINISTER'S SIDE. WHILE BOTH NIHAL SINGH AND IRANI DENY ANY BIAS, STATESMAN HAS GIVEN PROMINENT COVERAGE TO THE ORGANIZATION OF THE BOSE-DAS MUNSHI COALITION, AND THE CHIEF MINISTER'S SECRETARY, BHASKAR GHOSH, WAS A PROMINENT GUEST AT A SOCIALFUNCTION GIVEN BY IRANI EARLIER THIS WEEK.  
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UNQUOTE  
SCHNEIDER  
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## Message Attributes

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